DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 328 RC 021 604

AUTHOR Peach, Larry E.; Reddick, Thomas L.

TITLE Opinions of Teachers and Parents Concerning Contemporary Issues Affecting Rural Schools.

PUB DATE 1998-08-06

NOTE 8p.; Paper presented to the International Conference of Social Sciences (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, August 6, 1998).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Discipline; *Educational Attitudes; Educational Finance; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Inclusive Schools; *Parent Attitudes; Public Opinion; Public Schools; Questionnaires; *Rural Schools; *School Attitudes; *School Community Relationship; School Prayer; School Safety; *Teacher Attitudes

IDENTIFIERS *Tennessee (Central)

ABSTRACT

A random selection of 700 parents and teachers representing rural central Tennessee schools was surveyed in order to make their opinions available to policy makers. Usable responses were returned by 196 parents and 224 teachers. Parents opposed increasing public school funds through a lottery; teachers approved. Both groups believed that prayer and Bible reading should be permitted in school, and both opposed the establishment of charter schools in Tennessee. Parents strongly favored inclusion; teachers very strongly opposed it. Parents opposed paddling of unruly students; teachers strongly favored it. Both groups strongly agreed that school superintendents should be elected by the citizens, and that zero tolerance laws are not too strict. Parents did not think that teachers need more legal protection from harassment by parents and others, while teachers almost unanimously felt that they do need such protection. Both groups favored block scheduling in high schools, and both felt that smaller classes resulted in students learning more. Parents and teachers felt that discipline in school is worse than 10 years ago, but neither group felt that law enforcement officers should be placed in all high schools. Both groups thought that schools are safe. Parents thought achievement tests improved student learning, but teachers did not. Parents felt that they adequately supported decisions by principals and teachers concerning their children, while teachers firmly stated that parents did not adequately support them. Parents reported that varsity athletics are not given too much emphasis, but teachers believed that they are. The use of street language in required reading materials was strongly condemned by both groups. Parents felt that tenure is not needed to protect teachers, but teachers almost unanimously felt they needed such protection. (Contains questionnaire and survey data.) (TD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 421 328

OPINIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS CONCERNING CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AFFECTING RURAL SCHOOLS

BY

Dr. Larry E. Peach
Professor of Instructional Leadership
Tennessee Technological University
Cookeville, TN 38505

and

Dr. Thomas L. Reddick
Professor of Instructional Leadership
Tennessee Technological University
Cookeville, TN 38505

Presented to the
International Conference of Social Sciences
in
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
On August 6, 1998

RC 021604

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Larry E. Peach

OPINIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS CONCERNING CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AFFECTING RURAL SCHOOLS

Introduction and Problem

Rural schools are generally the focus of the communities in which they are located. Quality educational opportunities continue to be a concern of parents and teachers. Both groups strive for safe orderly schools and instructional programs which meet the needs of all students. It is important to glean the opinions of parents and school personnel to determine their views which will help to give direction for planning and program development. Successful schools must continually engage in program analysis which should result in improvement in programs and services.

Research Procedure

A questionnaire was developed with the cooperation of the Tennessee Tech University (Cookeville, Tennessee) Rural Education Research Consortium. An eighteen-item questionnaire was developed and deemed appropriate for the study. The questionnaire was distributed to 350 parents and 350 teachers representing rural schools, randomedly selected, through-out central Tennessee. A total of 196 usable questionnaires were returned by parents and 224 by teachers. The data are reported by an item by item technique. Percents of responses for each of the groups are shown in parentheses.

Presentation of Data

1. Should the Constitution of Tennessee amended to allow for a lottery to increase funds for public schools?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
78 (40)	118 (60)	123 (55)	101 (45)

2. Prayer and Bible reading should be permitted in public schools?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
163 (83)	33 (17)	148 (66)	76 (34)

3. Should "charter schools" be permitted in Tennessee?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
45 (24)	151 (76)	38 (17)	186 (83)

4. Does "inclusion" enhance public education?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
157 (80)	39 (20)	25 (11)	199 (89)

5. Should teachers be allowed to paddle unruly students?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
80 (41)	116 (59)	139 (62)	85 (38)

6. Should superintendents be elected by the people?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
176 (90)	20 (10)	175 (78)	49 (22)

7. Do teachers need more legal protection against parents or others who harass them?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
47 (24)	149 (76)	215 (96)	9 (4)

8. Is "Zero Tolerance" to strict?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
45 (24)	151 (76)	20 (9)	204 (91)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

9. Is "block scheduling" better than traditional high school scheduling?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
104 (53)	92 (47)	164 (73)	50 (27)

10. Would smaller classes actually cause students to learn more?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
137 (70)	59 (30)	193 (86)	31 (14)

11. Is discipline in public schools worse today than ten years ago?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
135 (69)	51 (31)	175 (78)	49 (22)

12. Should law enforcement officers be placed in all high schools?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
29 (15)	167 (85)	78 (35)	146 (65)

13. Are schools "safe" for students and teachers?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
172 (88)	24 (12)	130 (58)	94 (42)

14. Do achievement tests improve student learning?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
137 (70)	59 (30)	52 (23)	172 (77)

15. Do parents adequately support teachers and principals in decisions concerning their children?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
180 (92)	16 (8)	40 (18)	184 (82)

16. Are varsity athletics given too much emphasis in schools?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
69 (35)	127 (65)	166 (74)	58 (26)

17. Should "street language" be allowed in required reading materials for high school students?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
8 (4)	188 (96)	4 (2)	220 (98)

18. Is tenure still needed for protecting teachers?

Parents		Teachers	
Yes	No	Yes	No
43 (22)	153 (78)	220 (98)	4 (2)

Analysis of Data

The Constitution of the State of Tennessee expressly forbids the State Legislature from authorizing lotteries for any purpose (Constitution of the State of Tennessee, Article XI, Section 5). However, there has been much debate about amending the constitution to legalize a state lottery to bring in more revenue especially for public education.

The parents in this study opposed any amendment, while the teachers stated they would approve it.

Both parents and teachers believe that prayer and Bible reading should be permitted in the state's 137 public school systems. The two groups opposed the establishment of "charter schools" in Tennessee by rather wide margins.

The two groups disagreed on whether "inclusion" enhances public education. Parents strongly favored it, but teachers very strongly opposed it. Federal law mandates inclusion in all public schools at this time.

Parents opposed teachers "Paddling" unruly students in public schools, whereas teachers strongly favored it being allowed. The two groups very strongly agreed that public school

superintendents be elected by the citizens of each respective public school system. The Tennessee School Improvement Act of 1992 requires the appointment of all local chief school officers with the title of Director of Schools by the year 2000 (Acts 1992, Chapter 535, Section 90).

Parents do not think that teachers need more legal protection against parents or others who harass them. Teachers are almost unanimous in feeling that they do need more legal protection in such instances.

The groups strongly agree that "zero tolerance" laws, such as in Tennessee, are not too strict. Also, both groups favor "block scheduling" in high schools rather than traditional scheduling.

Teachers and parents felt smaller classes would result in students learning more. They agreed that discipline is worse today in public schools than it was ten years ago. Neither of the two groups felt law enforcement officers should be placed in all high schools, and they thought schools are "safe" for students and teachers.

Parents stated achievement tests improve student learning, but teachers did not think so. Tennessee requires such tests at certain grade levels. The parent participants said that they supported adequately decisions by principals and teachers concerning their children, while teachers firmly stated the parents did not support them adequately.

The group of parents reported that varsity athletics are not given too much emphasis in public schools; however, teachers

believed varsity athletics are given too much emphasis. The use of "street language" in required reading materials for students in public schools was strongly condemned by parents and teachers.

Most parents believe that tenure is not needed to protect teachers by providing job security. Teachers were nearly unanimous in declaring that they do need such job protection.

The information from this study should enable those concerned with policy-making, school personnel, and parents to understand their collective opinions concerning selected contemporary issues that affect rural schools. This understanding will, hopefully, be a factor in the improvement of rural schools and the communities that they serve.